

Exploring untold stories

The multimedia art exhibition 'Thread by Thread' at Goethe-Zentrum Hyderabad displays works of artist Baptist Coelho. His works comprise of fabrics and materials used by the Siachen soldiers



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Presenting emotions in an art form is difficult, but how can a simple piece of fabric tell a tale that is emotional, deeply personal and yet universal? Baptist Coelho, a Mumbai-based visual artist knows how to achieve this. "I have been researching the conflict in Siachen Glacier since almost ten years; I expressed what I observed and read, through art," he shares.

Coelho focussed on the life of soldiers, throughout his pieces. "I presented installations, photographs and sound based on the life of soldiers - not as a machine of war, but as a man with emotions and vulnerabilities. I am trying to reveal and understand conflict and war through observations and conversations that have been woven into the fabric of the lives of people, whether directly or indirectly affected," he says.

A panel discussion on "Border Stories and the Role of Fabric" was held on October 10. This is related to the theme of the exhibition, which seeks to explore the impact of conflict and war through the medium of textiles that were used by soldiers on the Siachen Glacier. The theme of the exhibition, 'Thread by Thread' was chosen based on a famous essay. The artist explains, "It is taken from an essay by the Russian writer and philosopher Leo Tolstoy. The quote describes my practice aptly."

His works include, 'Nowhere but

here,' a parachute's canopy 320 inches long, that is made up of thermal shirts, pants, nylon cords and metal rings. The parachute is seen as a sign of hope for a soldier whose survival depends on his awareness of being in the present moment - nowhere but here.

Further describing the beginnings of his work, he says, "My practice has been influenced by Louise Bourgeois, who once described clothing as an exercise of memory. It makes me explore like little signposts in the search for the past." As the central focus of this exhibition, he has re-appropriated soldiers' clothing and other discarded materials associated with the Glacier to explore untold stories. His works are emblematic of themes such as humanity, relationships, survival, history, honour and perseverance. This focus results in work of intense psychological complexity, exposing relationships and hierarchies that occur during the time of war.

Baptist Coelho received his Masters of Arts from Birmingham Institute of Art & Design (BIAD), UK (2006). He received various awards and exhibited internationally in museums, galleries and film screenings. He has conducted workshops, artist talks and panel discussions in Asia, Europe and South Africa as well. Coelho is the 2015-16 Leverhulme artist in-residence at the Department of War Studies, King's College, London.

The exhibit is on till October 24 at Goethe-Zentrum, Banjara Hills.

